

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE MEDICAL NUTRITION THERAPY AMENDMENT ACT OF 2001

HON. FRED UPTON

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 7, 2001

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with Representative ANNA ESCHOO and 55 other colleagues on both sides of the aisle today in introducing the Medicare Medical Nutrition Therapy Amendment Act of 2001. In the last Congress, we amended the Medicare program to provide coverage for medical nutrition therapy services provided by registered dietitians and nutrition professionals for persons with diabetes or renal disease. The legislation we are introducing today will add Medicare coverage for services for beneficiaries with cardiovascular disease.

Medical nutrition therapy provided by registered dietitians and nutrition professionals is sound health care policy. It can save millions of dollars for a health care system beleaguered by escalating costs, and it can prevent unnecessary pain and suffering for millions of people and their families. In response to a request in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences studied the value of adding medical nutrition therapy services for Medicare beneficiaries and the Medicare program and issued a report recommending that this benefit be added to the program. The report stated that coverage for medical nutrition therapy will "improve the quality of care and is likely to be a valuable and efficient use of Medicare resources, because of the comparatively low treatment costs and ancillary benefits associated with nutrition therapy." The report concluded that nutrition therapy has proven effective in the "management and treatment of many chronic diseases that affect Medicare beneficiaries, including . . . hypertension, heart failure, diabetes, and chronic renal insufficiency."

I urge my colleagues who have not yet co-sponsored this bipartisan, sound health policy proposal to join us in this effort.

BYRD R. BROWN

HON. WILLIAM J. COYNE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 7, 2001

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to observe the passing of one of Pittsburgh's civil rights heroes. Byrd Rowlette Brown died in Pittsburgh on May 3, 2001.

Mr. Brown was born and raised in Pittsburgh. His parents were both active in Pittsburgh's African American community. His father, Homer S. Brown, was a state legislator and the first African American judge in Allegheny County, and his mother, Wilhelmina Byrd Brown, was an educator and civil rights activist.

Byrd Brown graduated from Schenley High School in Pittsburgh and won an academic

scholarship to Yale University. Mr. Brown earned a Bachelor's degree and a law degree from Yale. He served in the Army after completing his education, and after his discharge he began practicing law in Pittsburgh.

In 1958, Mr. Brown was elected to the first of six two-year terms as president of the Pittsburgh NAACP. He was also one of the founders of the United Negro Protest Committee and the Black Construction Coalition. He worked successfully over the years to desegregate the local schools and eliminate discrimination in the employment practices of local corporations.

Mr. Brown was also a candidate in the Pittsburgh mayoral election of 1989, running on the slogan "Byrd's the word."

Byrd Brown was also active in a number of civic and legal organizations, including the National Bar Association, the American Bar Association, the American Bar Foundation, the Academy of Trial Lawyers, and the Pittsburgh Foundation.

With the death of Byrd Brown, Pittsburgh has lost a tireless civil rights crusader—a man who was dedicated to the fight for equality and the struggle for better race relations. I wish to extend my condolences to his family in their time of sadness and grief.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1836, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TAX RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 25, 2001

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to vote for this tax cut. It would be a politically easy vote. I could tell my constituents in Central Texas, including President Bush and my own family, that this bill would reduce their taxes.

However, I believe we have a moral obligation to our children and grandchildren to pay down our \$5.6 trillion national debt. I believe we have a moral obligation to provide a strong national defense and to support our servicemen and women, 60% of whom live in housing that does not even meet modest Department of Defense standards. I believe we have a moral obligation to provide a better education for all children and to protect Social Security and Medicare for our seniors.

In my opinion, this tax bill puts those key national priorities and moral obligations at risk.

This tax bill is a riverboat gamble. It is part of a 10-year budget built on a foundation of optimistic assumptions at best and false assumptions at worst. This budget assumes uninterrupted national growth for 10 years, with little or no consideration for the impact of economic recessions, regional wars or natural disasters. If this budget's national growth projections are off by only four-tenths of one percent, then a trillion dollars of the so-called surplus disappears, and with it our dream of paying off the national debt.

I have asked my constituents whether they would bet their own family's financial future

based upon the assumption that a government economist's 10-year economic forecast would be perfectly accurate. Their answer is "no". If families would not bet their own futures on such an unrealistic assumption, then Congress has no right to risk the American family's future on that assumption.

This bill leaves little or no room to fund priorities that this Administration says it supports, including a stronger national defense, real pay raises for our servicemen and women, a national missile defense, new investments in better schools and a prescription drug benefit for seniors on Medicare. Who knows what unexpected needs might develop over the next decade?

One little known fact is that the so-called \$5.6 trillion surplus is not real—it is a hoped for surplus. Even worse, 70% of the hoped for surplus does not materialize until 7 to 10 years from now.

What is real is our \$5.6 trillion national debt, which cost American taxpayers \$223 billion in interest payments last year. That, on average, is approximately \$800 in taxes for every man, woman and child in America.

Paying off the national debt would provide huge benefits for American families. Lower interest rates on homes, cars and credit cards would, in effect, be a significant tax cut. In addition, reduced interest on the national debt could result in reduced taxes for all Americans.

The final tax bill was put together late at night and voted on early the next morning without Members of Congress having time to review the bill or its cost. What can one say about a bill that repeals estate taxes nine years from now, but then repeals the repeal 12 months later? To call that an estate tax "repeal" borders on false advertising.

This bill is full of gimmicks to try to hide its true cost. Repealing all of its tax benefits at the end of the ninth year of a ten-year bill is a blatant way to try to hide this bill's real cost. Further, should those tax cuts be continued in year ten, the cost of this bill triples in the second ten years. Unfortunately, that is exactly when baby boomers start retiring and putting tremendous demands on the Social Security and Medicare systems. Thus, this bill truly puts Social Security and Medicare at risk for today's and tomorrow's seniors.

I will never forget what my predecessor, Congressman Marvin Leath, told me before his recent death. He said that his greatest regret during his 12 years in Congress was his vote for the 1981 tax bill, which he felt exploded the national debt. That bill promised lower taxes, increased defense spending and balanced budgets. Former OMB budget director David Stockman, a key architect of the 1981 tax bill, later wrote of it, "I knew we were on the precipice of triple-digit deficits, a national debt in the trillions, and destructive and profound dislocations throughout the . . . American economy."

Twenty years later, the 2001 tax bill promises lower taxes, increased defense spending and balanced budgets. Unfortunately, I believe the results will be the same as 20 years ago—deficit spending, a larger national debt, and higher interest rates.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I was wrong. I hope our economy has another decade of growth without recession or serious slowdown. I hope we